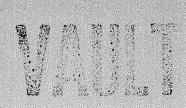
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E. M. POWERS, C. C. AY, G. A. ECKFELDT, AND D. B. ROWLEY

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Modification of the American Public Health Association Procedure for Counting Yeast and Mold in Cottage Cheese

E. M. POWERS, C. C. AY, G. A. ECKFELDT, AND D. B. ROWLEY

Microbiology Division, Food Laboratory, U.S. Army Natick Laboratories, Natick, Massachusetts 01760

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The American Public Health Association method for counting low numbers of yeast and mold in cottage cheese was unsatisfactory due to altered pH of the culture medium. A modification of this method is presented.

Problems in enumerating yeast and mold were encountered during military subsistence testing of cottage cheese. These problems have resulted from the changes made in the American Public Health Association (APHA) 12th edition of Standard Methods for the Examination of Dairy Products (2). Military Subsistence Testing Laboratories must comply with these changes since the APHA method is cited in Military Specification MIL-C-43274A (3).

The APHA method (2) for counting yeast and mold in cottage cheese calls for diluting the cheese 1:10 with 2% sodium citrate which has been preheated to 40 C. Where the count is expected to be low, a 10-ml amount is distributed evenly among three petri plates and poured with acidified (pH 3.5) Potato Dextrose Agar (PDA, Difco). This procedure raises the pH of PDA sufficiently to permit bacterial growth, so that it is difficult to distinguish yeast from bacterial colonies. Previous to the 12th edition, the APHA method (1) prescribed a 1:2 dilution of cottage cheese in 2% sodium citrate; 1 ml was then distributed into each of two petri plates. Although the PDA remained inhibitory to bacterial growth, the heavy suspension clouded the medium and made the petri plates difficult to read. The present investigation was undertaken to improve the APHA method for counting yeasts and molds in cottage cheese.

Table 1 shows the effect of plating 1 ml and 3.3 ml of a 1:10 dilution of cottage cheese in 2% sodium citrate on the ρH and bacterial inhibition of acidified PDA. Bacterial growth occurred only when 3.3 ml of the cheese was cultured. This was due to the increase in ρH of PDA from

3.5 to 5.6 when 10 ml of the medium was poured as recommended by APHA (2). Even when 20 ml of PDA was poured, the pH of the medium went as high as 4.9, which also permitted bacterial growth. The 1:10 cheese-citrate dilution had a pH of 6.6. Consequently, 3.3 ml cannot be plated without adversely affecting the pH of the medium, upon which the selectivity of the PDA

Table 1. Effect of volume of a cottage cheese citrate slurry on microbial growth in acidified Potato Dextrose Agar (PDA)

Vol of cheese slurry ^a	Vol of PDA at pH 3.5 (ml)	PDA + cheese		Bac- terial	Mold
		Appearance	ρH	growth ^b	per gram ^c
1.0	10 20	Clear Clear	4.5 4.0		8
3.3	10 20	Cloudy Cloudy	5.6 4.9	++	9 9

^a Cheese was diluted 1:10 with sterile 2% sodium citrate at 40 C.

is dependent. Plating 1 ml into each of five plates resulted in a clear medium which inhibited bacterial growth and yielded a mold count per gram comparable to that obtained by plating 3.3 ml in each of three plates. The samples of cottage cheese examined were negative for yeast.

Three bacterial species inoculated into cottage cheese were recovered quantitatively in acidified PDA (Table 2) by the above APHA method (2). None of the bacteria was inhibited by acidified PDA when 3.3 ml of the citrate-cheese slurry was

^b -, Negative; +, positive.

^c All plates incubated at 23 \pm 2 C for 5 days.

¹ Defense Subsistence Testing Laboratory, Defense Personnel Support Center, Chicago, Ill.

Table 2. Effect of volume of a cheese-citrate slurry on the recovery of bacteria in acidified Potato Dextrose Agara

	Avg no.	Avg. no. cells recovered		
Bacteria	inoculated per plate	Cheese (1 ml)	Cheese 3.3 ml	
E. coli (ATTC 11840) S. faecalis (M.I.T. strain) S. aureus (U. Md. strain)	11 110 7 91 5	No growth No growth No growth No growth No growth No growth	11 141 16 71 1 5	

^a Cottage cheese was diluted 1:10 with sterile 2% sodium citrate at 40 C.

b Based on counts obtained in plate count agar

after incubation for 96 hr at 36 C.

plated. However, the medium did remain inhibitory to these bacteria when only 1 ml of the cheese-citrate slurry was plated, since the pH of PDA only increased to 4.0 or 4.5 depending on the volume of PDA poured (Table 1).

It is apparent that the APHA method (2) for counting low numbers of yeast and mold in cottage cheese should be modified. The method must be one which inhibits bacterial growth but allows yeast and mold to form colonies. The following modification of the APHA method accomplishes this objective.

Prepare a 1:10 dilution of cottage cheese in sterile 2% sodium citrate preheated to 40 C, as stated in the APHA method (2). Instead of distributing 10 ml evenly among three plates, transfer 1 ml into each of five petri plates and pour with 10 to 20 ml of PDA acidified to pH 3.5. Multiply the total number of colonies on the five plates by 2 to obtain the count per gram of cheese. The accuracy may be increased by plating 1 ml into each of 10 petri plates, in which case the total number of colonies will represent the count per gram of cheese. Except for these changes, the microbiological testing of cottage cheese remains as given by APHA.

LITERATURE CITED

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- 3. Military specification MIL-C-43274A. 1966. Cheese, cottage, dehydrated, creamed. Naval Publications and Forms Center, Philadelphia.

^c Counts in 20 ml of Potato Dextrose Agar were determined after incubation at 23 \pm C for 5 days.